

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 5

By Goins

A RESOLUTION to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

WHEREAS, for the past 100 years, the Tennessee Department of Transportation has provided this State with a safe and efficient transportation system, which is the lifeline on which Tennessee's economic well-being depends; and

WHEREAS, initially directed on a random basis by the governor or the legislature, Tennessee transportation services were standardized in 1915, when the 59th General Assembly established the State Highway Commission and State Highway Department to build a public highway system spanning Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, as the resources and scope of the program grew with the passage of the Federal Aid Road Act in 1916, the highway department began its first federally funded project, Route 16 in Franklin County between Cowan and Monteagle; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1920s, Governor Austin Peay set out to improve the State's transportation system and implemented Tennessee's first gas tax in 1923, to pay for road projects based on a user tax model; and

WHEREAS, the Division of Aeronautics was created in 1929 to promote the growth of aviation and procure and develop landing fields and airports. The first airport to open after the establishment of the division was the Sky Harbor Airport, located seven miles north of Murfreesboro, which remained Tennessee's principal commercial airfield for nearly a decade; and

WHEREAS, between the 1920s and 1940s, Tennessee's highway, bridge, and beautification projects were developed under the New Deal, which also created the Tennessee Valley Authority; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, a skeleton crew maintained the roads deemed necessary for the transportation of troops and equipment under the federal Betterment Program; and

WHEREAS, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, sponsored by Tennessee's United States Representative Albert Gore Sr., authorized the construction of a ninety-percent-federally-funded, 41,000-mile National System of Interstates and Defense Highways spanning the nation; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s and 1970s, the highway department focused on building the new interstate system, and the first interstate project was a section of Interstate 65 at the Alabama border, which was followed by the construction of Interstate 40, Interstate 24, and Interstate 75; and

WHEREAS, as old systems expanded and new ones developed, coordination between transportation modes became necessary. In 1972, Governor Winfield Dunn renamed the State Highway Department the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT); and

WHEREAS, in the 1980s, Tennessee roads were in great need of improvement, and as a result, the 1986 Better Roads Program was established to improve existing roads and build new ones, eventually making Tennessee the number one state highway system in the nation. State Route 840, a seventy-eight-mile route around Nashville, was one of the program's largest projects and was completed in 2012; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's bridges were also in desperate shape by the late 1980s, leading to the creation of the Bridge Inspection Program, which is now one of the most respected bridge programs in the nation; and

WHEREAS, after making improvements to roadways and bridges in the 1980s and 1990s, TDOT evaluated efficient transportation systems and installed high occupancy vehicle lanes in 1993, launched strategic plans for a new intelligent transportation system (ITS) in 1998, and established the TDOT HELP program in 1999; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, the department's ITS was renamed TDOT SmartWay, and has been a tremendous success, giving motorists the tools for efficient transportation, including vehicle detection devices, video surveillance, dynamic message signs, and freeway service patrols; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, TDOT established the Better Bridges Program to replace or repair 200 structurally deficient bridges, which it accomplished in four years, making Tennessee's one of the nation's top bridge systems. Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, TDOT completed over 300 federally funded highway projects for infrastructure improvements; and

WHEREAS, TDOT now maintains 19,721 bridges and was ranked by CNBC as second in "America's Top States for Transportation and Infrastructure" in 2013. The Aeronautics Division now licenses 142 helicopters and seventy-four public and general aviation airports, and maintains one of the best aviation systems in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the department is currently headed by Commissioner John S. Schroer, who is focused on restructuring, expediting, and improving TDOT's processes. Since his appointment on January 15, 2011, his plans for improvement have saved Tennessee millions of dollars, with more to come in the next decade; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Department of Transportation began with one employee who managed 4,000 State highway miles that were traveled by 79,180 vehicles, and an annual State budget of \$474,236; and

WHEREAS, today, there are 3,900 employees who care for 13,884 State highway miles driven by 6,898,157 motorists with State and federal funding amounting to \$1.8 billion annually; and

WHEREAS, it is wholly fitting that we recognize the Tennessee Department of Transportation for improving Tennessee's transportation systems, for its profound contributions to the success of this State's economy, and for ensuring the safety of its citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE

CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the Tennessee Department of Transportation upon the commemoration of its 100th anniversary, and extend to the department our deepest gratitude for its hard work and dedicated service to the citizens of this State.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.